

You can prevent falls:

Fact Sheet No. 3

By reducing the risks!

As we get older, our bodies change and we can become more susceptible to falls. Certain risks can be eliminated and others considerably reduced by simple prevention measures.

General physical fitness

Given that our daily routines become less physically demanding as we age, we can experience reduced physical fitness, increasing the risk of falls. Maintaining or regaining physical fitness is the most effective falls prevention measure of all. All forms of exercise, formal and informal, can help maintain the strength and vitality that will protect us from injury. Consult *Canada's Physical Activity Guide to Healthy Active Living for Older Adults**.

Ability to maintain balance

Balance is an important element of fitness. Tai Chi, yoga and dancing are all exercises that increase balance and steadiness — proof that keeping fit can be fun. Other factors can affect balance, including improper use of eyeglasses, misuse or disuse of assistive devices, and certain medications. Make sure you're aware of these dangers. Exercise for balance and use devices and medications appropriately.

Diet and eating habits

Regular healthy meals help keep up strength and vitality. Consult *Canada's Food Guide** to ensure optimum nutrition. If you don't enjoy preparing meals by yourself, occasionally invite friends, eat out, or develop a routine that makes you look forward to your meals (candlelit table, special treat, etc.).

Precautions in and around the house

Reduce the risks of falls and injuries around the house by removing obstacles, improving access and installing aids (grab bars, night lights, etc.) around the house and garden. Consult *The Safe Living Guide** to improve safety in your home.

Walking conditions

Poorly maintained sidewalks, unlit streets and icy conditions can be dangerous. Before going outside, consider whether it's completely safe. Make sure you report any unsafe conditions in the neighbourhood.

Use of medications

Be aware that medications can sometimes cause dizziness or other side effects. Read instructions and warnings carefully. Consult your doctor, pharmacist or health care worker about the possible side effects of the prescription or off-the-counter medications you take. And remember that medication and alcohol can be a dangerous combination!

Note:

With a restricted budget, it can be hard to find the money for exercise classes or home improvements such as grab bars or assistive devices. Veterans should contact their nearest Veterans Affairs Canada District Office to find out about programs and services they may be eligible to receive that can improve their well-being and help them to stay in their home and community. Seniors can contact the municipality, the local health centre or their local Seniors' organization to obtain information on services available at reduced cost or free of charge.

*You can obtain these publications free of charge by calling 1 800 O-Canada (1 800 622-6232).

Please feel free to photocopy this Fact Sheet!